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Report sees SBIA growth

Airport to serve 8.7M fliers per year by 2030

By Staff and Wire Reports

LOS ANGELES - A proposal by the **Southern California Association of Governments** predicts
San Bernardino International Airport will serve 8.7 million passengers by 2030.

SBIA now accommodates only general aviation and some air cargo.

The total projected by the SCAG report envisions SBIA serving more passengers than the John
Wayne Airport in Orange County and Burbank Airport in the San Fernando Valley now handle
combined.

The report predicts air traffic will double in Southern California over the next three decades and calls for major expansions not only at SBIA, but also at airports in Victorville, Riverside and Palmdale.

The SCAG proposal predicts Southern California Logistics Airport, the former George Air Force Base, in Victorville now would serve 4 million passengers a year, and March Inland Port Airport in Riverside County, next to the March Air Reserve Base, would handle 8 million travelers.

Although Los Angeles International Airport will remain the region's air-traffic hub, the newly released SCAG 2004 transportation proposal calls for growth to be shifted from LAX to airports in Palmdale, Riverside County, Victorville and San Bernardino.

The proposal calls for Palmdale Airport, abandoned by airlines since 1998 for lack of business, to become Southern California's third-largest airport by 2030 an international hub handling 12.8 million passengers annually.

The proposal projects that the annual passenger volume at LAX would increase to 78 million travelers from 56.2 million last year and more than quadruple at Ontario International Airport, to 30 million.

Some officials voiced hearty support for SCAG's plan to decentralize the region's air traffic, but others called the proposal overly ambitious.

Designating Palmdale as an international hub "doesn't stand in the face of market realities," Palmdale Mayor Jim Ledford said.

Ledford co-chairs a group that has been trying unsuccessfully in recent years to lure commercial carriers back to Palmdale-Lancaster area of Los Angeles County.

Jim Ritchie, deputy director for long-range planning for Los Angeles World Airports, said SCAG's projections are in line with the analyses by his agency, which oversees those airports.

"My knee-jerk reaction is 12 (million passengers) is ambitious for Palmdale," Ritchie said.

The backbone of the SCAG transportation plan is a high-speed, magnetically powered railway, a so-called maglev system, that would eventually connect all the airports via 275 miles of track.

Another is centralized coordination of planning, construction and operations for all the airports.

The report forecasts that the volume of travelers in the region, which last year was 77.8 million passengers, would grow to 170 million by 2030 if airport planning were coordinated and the maglev system built.

Without those improvements, growth would be limited to 140.8 million travelers annually, according to SCAG.

The draft of SCAG's proposal is being circulated for public comment until Jan. 16. It is scheduled for an approval vote by the agency's governing council in April.

A regional planning agency, SCAG has no authority over airports or land use, and its plans are strictly advisory.

But although SCAG can't implement projects, they must be included in its regional plan, which is updated every three years, to qualify for state and federal funding. Sun Business Editor Jim Steinberg and City News Service contributed to this report.

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